

From the CHRISTIAN CYNOSURE.  
The Sunday School Service.

Aug. 24th, 1884.

The Plague Stayed.—2 Samuel 24: 24—25.  
GOLDEN EXT.—"So the Lord was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed.—2 Sam. 24: 25.

I. *The numbering of the people.* This was not an ordinary census, for that was perfectly legitimate, and was expressly provided for by the Mosaic law; and upon three occasions at least, a census was taken by Moses without offence. It was not then the census itself which was displeasing to God, but the motive which inspired David to take it.—*Cambridge Bible.* The probability is that this census was a step towards the formal enrollment of the whole male population for stricter military service than they had hitherto rendered. They had formed a vast reserve of militia, but it had been under the orders of their local or tribal chiefs, and had been liable in ordinary cases only to a month's service a year. The new census may have been intended to furnish the king with a muster roll of the whole population, which he might use to prejudice the national liberties and to aggrandize the power of the throne.—*Geikie.*

II. *The Sin of Numbering the People.* (1) It seems clear that what constituted the sin of the act was the vainglorious spirit which prompted it. In a moment of pride and ambition—pride at the prosperity of the kingdom, ambition to be like the kings of the nations round about—he desired to know to the full over how vast and populous a kingdom he ruled, forgetting that the strength of Israel consisted not in the number of its people but in the protecting care of God. This view is strongly corroborated by Joab's expostulation.—*Cambridge Bible.* (2) The sin is not confined to David; it had infected the nation. It is expressly said that the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, but the anger of the Lord could only be awakened by some form of evil doing. It may be that now, on the very threshold of their national existence, they were tempted by visions of worldly glory to forget that Israel was not to realize its vocation to the world in the guise of a conquering secular state, but as Jehovah's witness among the nations. If so, if pride was alienating the heart of king and people from their allegiance to Jehovah, a prompt chastisement was the truest mercy.—*Cambridge Bible.*

"A pestilence upon Israel." A plague, a black death, a cholera, or other form of dreadful epidemic.—*Taylor.* Aggravated by the very greatness of the population which had occasioned the census, spreading with the rapidity of an oriental disorder in crowded habitations, it flew from end to end of the country in three days, and at last approached Jerusalem. The new capital, the very heart of the nation, the peculiar glory of David's reign, seemed to be doomed to destruction.—*Stanley.* If we admit that there is a personal God and that he is in any real sense the moral governor of mankind, the conclusion is irresistible, that he regulates the occurrence of the physical universe with a view to the moral training of his human creatures. As Isaac Taylor has remarked, "This is, in fact, the great miracle of providence, that no miracles are needed to accomplish its purposes." Just as the parent seeks to benefit his child morally, by inflicting on him some physical suffering, so God in his government of the world checks the sins of men by sending upon communities the physical calamities of pestilence, famine, and the like. I do not deny, of course, that these calamities come through the ordinary operation of law; what I affirm is, that these laws have been so adjusted by the Divine Governor of the world, that through them, and without any miraculous interference with them, he visits moral evil with physical chastisement; and so it is not superstition, but rather the truest piety and the highest philosophy, which leads a people, under such a visitation as that of famine, to turn to Jehovah, saying, "Show us wherefore thou contendest with us."—*Taylor.*

"And when the angel," The destroying angel. Angels are God's ministers in temporal judgment now, as well as in the final judgment hereafter (compare Ex. 12: 23; Ps. 78: 49; 2 Kings 19: 35; Acts 12: 23; Matt. 13: 41).—*Cambridge Bible.*

"Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly." David knew his sins, and therefore could confess them. He did not know how much or how little the people had sinned, but he felt that his own sin was so great that he himself deserved the punishment, and he wished to bear it instead of them. It belongs to the very nature of truly penitential prayer that the person praying takes all the blame upon himself.—*Keil.* Most people, when God's judgments are abroad, charge others with being the cause of them, so they can escape.—*Henry.*

"Go up, rear an altar," etc. This is all that is communicated here of the word of Jehovah which God was to convey to the king; the

rest is given afterwards; in the course of the subsequent account of the fulfilment of the divine command (verse 21) David was to build an altar, and offer burnt-offerings and supplicatory offerings upon it. The plague would then be averted from Israel.—*Keil.* Besides his prayer, David has now to make public affirmation of his guilt, and of his willingness henceforth with the people to devote himself as an offering to the Lord, by building an altar.—*Lange.*

#### COMMENTS BY E. E. FLAGG.

NATIONS MUST SUFFER FOR THEIR RULERS' MISTAKES AND SINS.

1. *God punishes nations for the sins of their rulers.* Vs. 15-18. David was punished for his sin in numbering the people, by losing in one day seventy thousand of his subjects. We do not know exactly what made his act so sinful. It could not have been wrong in itself. God himself commanded a census of the population to be taken by Moses (Num. 1: 2). Yet as even Joab, a man of little or no religious principle, tried earnestly to dissuade the king from his purpose, there must have been peculiar circumstances which made the act a flagrant and open violation of God's revealed will. He had now given David peace from his enemies (22: 1). His anxiety, therefore, to know how many fighting men he could call into the field, did not rise from any fear of foreign invasion, but was doubtless the promptings of presumptuous pride, or ambitious desire of foreign conquest. There were two reasons why David was forbidden to play the role of a conqueror like the heathen kings of other nations, the first reason being inherent in the very genius of the Hebrew constitution. To extend his dominions by subjugating other countries would have divided the people into two parts—the conqueror and conquered—and thus introduced a dual element in which their divine unity and separateness would have been lost. Furthermore God had already testified his hatred of war and bloodshed by not allowing David to build the temple. Thus we can see that his sin was great. That nations suffer for the sins of their rulers is borne out of every page of history. Ambitious, selfish monarchs plunge their respective kingdoms into a fruitless, unjustifiable war, which brings on their subjects only poverty, misery and ruin. When Catherine de Medici murdered the Protestants on St. Bartholomew's day, and Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, France suffered by the sins of her wicked rulers a loss to her industries, morals and wealth that has never been made up; for if the Huguenots had stayed she would probably to-day have been a Protestant nation, and been spared many of the scenes of lawlessness and atrocity that mark her after history.

2. *God punishes nations for the mistakes of her rulers.* All sins are mistakes and mistakes are all more or less sins. Slavery kept our country in agitation for twenty years and involved her in a four years' civil strife because the founders of our government, great and good men though they were, made a mistake. They believed slavery was wrong, but though they could then have easily have put it down, they let it alone, thinking it would die out of itself. So many think about Masonry, but it is a fact that no great evil ever died by being let alone. The tiny sapling that a child could pull up becomes the giant oak that defies the whirlwind. Though David confesses the sin to be his only, yet the people were not guiltless. V. 1. They had sinned, too, and roused God's anger. We, whose boast it is that we govern ourselves, suffer justly for the monstrous crime and blunder of our rulers in licensing the liquor traffic. We have the power to make prohibitory laws and of choosing good men to enforce them. If we do neither we must expect God's judgment.

#### LIGHT FROM THE WORD.

Who is said to be better than an old and foolish king? Eccl. 4: 13. Who should be our king? 1 Tim. 1: 17. If we are loyal to Him will it save us from choosing weak and corrupt rulers and suffering through their sins? Is. 33: 22.

#### LESSON.

1. Sins expose us to temptation, and temptation leads us to other sins (Introduction).
2. The heart may be in a very sinful state, very provoking to the Lord, when neither its owner nor another can see it. (Introduction).
3. The breaking out of a sinful state into sinful acts may be part of God's merciful plan for producing conviction and repentance. (Introduction.)
4. Any affliction that brings men to penitence is merciful (v. 15).
5. God will not permit afflictions to become heavier than his people need (v. 16).
6. We should study and believe in the ministration of angels (v. 16).
7. Seeing God's hand in everything will incline us to apply to him for relief in everything (v. 17).

8. We need a Savior in all the offices of prophet, priest and king (v. 18).

9. Grace is not always in proportions to religious privileges (vs. 22, 23).

10. Instead of being reluctant, we should be eager to make sacrifices for Christ (v. 24).

11. Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (v. 25; 1 Pet. 1: 18, 19).—*U. P. Bible Teacher.*

#### From Sister Crick.

Dear Editor: I will try and write again for our welcome EVANGELIST. I feel that I could not do without it; but it has been some time since I have written for it. I sometimes think that my letters are too simple, but as long as you print them it encourages me to write. I noticed the Supper question in No. 29, and it has aroused my curiosity to know whether the Brethren have put away the soup as a part of our lovefeast, as I have not been to a lovefeast since the church is divided I take the privilege of referring to a few passages of scripture concerning the soup and the way Christ made use of it. I question if the soup should be continued in our day.

Matthew 26th, 17. The disciples came to Jesus saying unto him, where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?

18. And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

19. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.

21. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.

22. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?

23. And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

It appears that Christ did not tell his disciples to go and prepare the supper, but they came to him asking as though they were accustomed to it. We will read what Mark said.

Mark 14th, 12. "His disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover."

13. And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

16. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them; and they made ready the passover.

18. And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, one of you which eateth with me shall betray me.

19. And they began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him, one by one, Is it I? and another said, Is it I?

20. And he answered and said unto them, It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish."

Well, it appears that Mark gives very near the same story. Let us read what Luke said:

Luke 22nd, 7. "Then came the day of unleavened bread when the passover must be killed."

8. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat."

13. And they went and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

14. And when the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.

16. For I say unto you, I will not anymore eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

It appears that Luke said that the Lord sent Peter and John to prepare the passover. Before I close we will see what John said about it.

John 13th, 21. "When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me."

22. Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake."

26. Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon."

Question: Have we any proof that the soup should or should not be followed up in this our day? Some one please answer.

SISTER CRICK.  
West Salem, Ohio.

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#### Dedication at Mechanicsburg, Pa.

EDITOR EVANGELIST: As a result of the tyrannical spirit of the whilom leaders in the German Baptist hierarchy, I am permitted to chronicle the good news to the readers of the EVANGELIST, of the dedicating of another Brethren's meeting house, located at the village of Mechanicsburg, Schuylkill county, Pa., three miles from Meyersdale, and not more than ten or fifteen rods from the large old meeting house, which many years ago was built jointly by the Brethren and German Baptists, from which the Brethren were first expelled and afterwards locked out, because, forsooth, they preferred the Gospel rather than the diction of annual meeting.

Brother Wilt, from Berlin, Pa., did the preaching, assisted by brother A. D. Gnagey, of Meyersdale. The text for the dedicatory sermon, was taken from Psalms 26: 8, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." I have neither the time, space nor ability, to give even a synopsis of the sermon, but will add that it was a masterly effort; giving a history of God's people in brief, under the old dispensation. That when they followed God's behests they were invariably blessed with peace and plenty, but as soon as they demurred—set up a golden calf or their own notions, placed the ark on an ox-cart, instead of carrying it, or as now, make a shad-belly coat or Dunkard bonnet, a test of membership, having the audacity to pervert the spirit or animus of the Gospel of Christ, engendering and practicing hate, instead of love, demoralizing and disorganizing the church—on such actions the blessing of God will not rest, whilst they may seemingly flourish for a while. Saul was a great king, but self-will and jealousy brought him to an ignominious end. I congratulate our brotherhood on the success attending our humble efforts, and that, too, whilst we are despoiled in our interests in the old meeting houses built by us, and our fathers, long before many of the German Baptists now locking us out, were members or even born. Yet we have the consolation that we are getting better houses in lieu, and we are not encumbered with the traditions of an ignorant, self-righteous bishopric. I will conclude by saying that we are having good meetings, having no annual meeting rubbish to preach. We have very interesting Sunday schools at Meyersdale and Mechanicsburg. Brother A. D. Gnagey is doing most of the preaching for both congregations.

U. M. BEACHLEY.

#### At Last.

DEAR EVANGELIST: The Lovefeast and Communion long had in contemplation by the Brethren church in this place (Washington county, Md.,) is now among the things of the past. On the evening of June 26th, we met, during heavy showers of rain, it continuing to rain during all the evening. The services were held in the new Union chapel, in the little village of Mt. Pleasant, at the base of the South Mountain. Elder Wm. L. Spanogle assisted in the dedication on the 24th, and officiated in the communion services. He preached in all, four telling sermons, in the short time he sojourned among us. The preparatory sermon, though not as usual from 11th chapter of 1st Cor. but from these words "The man that covereth up his sins shall not prosper, but he that confesseth them before God shall find mercy," was a grand success. It inevitably led to inward self-scrutiny, giving no one occasion or time to look away from his or her own heart. It made us all feel as though we wanted to be alone with God for a little season, as we were in silent prayer. It was a solemn time indeed. The chapel was just comfortably filled, and the number of communicants much larger than expected, considering the rainy day and evening. One thought passed through our mind while the tables were being prepared by the brethren, going and coming through the rain to and from adjoining houses with the prepared supper and tableware, and that was this: "How must the German Baptist preacher, deacon, and lay brethren present feel over the thought, Well, we voted these brethren out of the Beaver Creek meeting house, turned the key against them, where all could work in the dry, and where all things pertaining to the tables are at hand, and now see them trudging through the rain for everything they need; while those brethren and sisters bought the tableware we prohibited them from using." Was it with them a source of gratification or regret? The eye that never sleeps alone knows the thoughts of these dear deceived brethren that night. The feast was none the less enjoyable to us, and for the first time your unworthy correspondent had the extreme pleasure, at last, to sit down with his whole family around the table of the Lord, because no prohibitory elder edict had gone out against any of us, as had been the case in former ring usurpation and misrule.

E. S. MILLER.